



PRESS RELEASE

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77th Annual Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting and Holiday Food Drive Brings More Than 100 Pallets of Food to 140,000 Needy Californians *CaliforniaVolunteers Encourages More Californians to Give this Season*

SACRAMENTO, Calif., – CaliforniaVolunteers, in partnership with the Office of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Office of First Lady Maria Shriver, Foodlink and several major grocery chains is hosting a holiday food drive in conjunction with the 77th annual State Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. The *WE Can Holiday Food Drive* encourages families and individuals to bring non-perishable items to the West Steps of the State Capitol today to support needy families and individuals throughout the region during this holiday season. More than 100 pallets of food totaling approximately 100,000 pounds has been collected to date and will be distributed to more than 150 area food banks and agencies.

According to Feeding America, the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity, hunger is a reality for more than 1 in 8 Americans. Feeding America estimates that approximately 36.2 million Americans (*23.8 million adults and 12.4 million children*) live in food insecure households.

“Our state’s greatest resource has always been its people and I am extremely proud of the California families, companies and individuals who made donations to help those less fortunate this holiday season,” said Governor Schwarzenegger. “The success of this food drive reflects the generosity we have come to expect from our fellow Californians who understand the importance of giving back to their communities and I hope this spirit of service continues throughout the coming year.”

“Arnold and I are thrilled with the success of this year’s food drive,” said First Lady Maria Shriver. “This holiday season, more than ever many people and their families are struggling to make ends meet. This affects all Californians and millions throughout our nation. WE have shown that together WE CAN make a difference in the lives of others, and we are so inspired by the incredible generosity of the public and our great partners. We are so grateful for their extraordinary commitment and we hope it will inspire all Californians to be architects of change in their own communities.”

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As part of the *WE Can Holiday Food Drive*, corporate sponsors have also stepped up to provide much needed support. Raley's and Safeway have each donated approximately 20 pallets worth of food. SaveMart has donated approximately 5 pallets worth of food and Costco has donated approximately 60 pallets.

"California grocers have a long tradition of helping those in need," said Ronald Fong, President and CEO of California Grocers Association. "Today's event is an extension of the hunger relief efforts grocers undertake year-round and particularly during the holiday season. I want to thank Costco, Raley's, Safeway and Save Mart for going the extra mile to support this worthy cause."

"As the holiday season quickly approaches, we can't forget the millions of people in our state who live in poverty, often without food on the table or a roof over their heads," said Secretary of Service and Volunteering Karen Baker. "And while the problem is bigger than any one of us can solve, every one of us can make a difference by volunteering in our communities or simply donating a food item. Together WE can all give something back this holiday season."

To learn how to give help those in need this holiday season, please visit CaliforniaVolunteers.org.

About CaliforniaVolunteers

CaliforniaVolunteers is the state office that manages programs and initiatives to increase the number of Californians involved with service and volunteering, including the state AmeriCorps program, California Citizen Corps and the Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning. Through the innovative Web site, CaliforniaVolunteers.org, individuals and families can find more than 40,000 volunteer opportunities throughout the state involving the arts, education, animals, disaster preparedness, the environment and other areas of interest. Karen Baker, the nation's first state cabinet secretary of service and volunteering leads the organization and First Lady Maria Shriver serves as the honorary chairperson. For more information, please visit www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org.

About California Emergency Foodlink

California Emergency Foodlink was founded in 1992 with the mission of finding sensible solutions to hunger that effectively address its root causes: poverty and joblessness. To accomplish its mission, Foodlink has implemented a strategy of: building better communities by providing jobs; preventing hunger and training for the future. Foodlink warehouses and delivers Emergency Food Assistance Program commodities to agencies that serve the hungry in California. Through the Donate Don't Dump program, Foodlink gleans surplus produce from the agricultural industry for distribution to agencies that serve the hungry.

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